



National Association of State Medicaid Directors

Center for Workers with Disabilities

Working to Enhance Public Policy for Persons with Disabilities

On January 19, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA's) established the Center for Workers with Disabilities to aid participating states implement provisions of the "Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999" (TWWIIA; P.L. 106-170) or related efforts intended to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Center is housed within one of APHSA's affiliates, the National Association of State Medicaid Directors (NASMD). For more information on APHSA and its affiliates, including NASMD, go to www.aphsa.org.

Supported by dues from member state agencies, membership in the Center is open to all states that have received a TWWIIA Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and that are implementing or considering implementation of Medicaid eligibility expansions for persons with disabilities who wish to return to or join the workforce.

The Center is governed by a steering committee composed of a representative from each member state. Founding members include: Idaho, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oregon, and Rhode Island.

Services

The Center for Workers with Disabilities offers states the following services:

Public Policy Support Services: The Center offers states an array of services aimed at growing or enhancing employment opportunities and other efforts that will enable persons with disabilities to be full participants in their communities including:

- Technical assistance and guidance to support state efforts to design or expand Medicaid infrastructures supporting the competitive employment

of persons with disabilities. Center staff will organize and coordinate consultant services to states from other participating state staff who have expertise in the particular area of need. Center staff will also provide consultant services as possible based on Center resources.

- A resource bank or “library” of up-to-date information and experiences from states with more fully developed infrastructures supporting the competitive employment of persons with disabilities. The Center will make this information available in various media in order to enhance the quality of these infrastructures (see publications below);
- Co-located with the National Association of State Medicaid Directors (NASMD), the Center offers a mechanism for the timely exchange of information about state activities and the identification of operational and policy issues with HCFA as they relate to such infrastructures;
- Access to NASMD resources including a close working relationship with HCFA staff, access to the state/federal Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) expertise. Currently, Center staff work closely with the Long Term Care TAG and the Eligibility TAG;
- Access to critical Federal agencies (i.e., SSA, DOL, and ED) relating to policies affecting workers with disabilities and, subsequently, serving as a focal point for the regular exchange of information with these agencies on state activities and operational issues, as well as the formal channel for policy recommendations;
- Monitoring federal executive branch issuances -- regulations, policy or operational guidance as well as Congressional legislation impacting on programs serving all persons with disabilities. Center staff will synthesize such activities and transmit summaries to participating states and, when appropriate, develop a consolidated response to federal proposals or activity;
- A forum for sharing exemplary state practices and exchange of experiences in TWWIIA and BBA implementation through conferences, seminars, electronic list serves, electronic bulletin boards at the Center Web Site, and teleconferences; and

- Close connections with national, Washington-based advocacy organizations, such as the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) and sister state executive branch organizations (i.e., the National Governors' Association (NGA), the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS), the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD), etc.) allowing the Center to build coalitions around issues related to employment for persons with disabilities.

Information Dissemination: Another key area of work for the Center is synthesis and dissemination of information on promising practices in states implementing TWWIIA including : a) health care expansions and options; b) income and eligibility criteria impacting on Medicaid eligibility and participation in work incentive programs; c) benefit coordination for individuals participating in a work or return to work program and receiving Social Security benefits and/or publicly-financed acute health or long term care service; d) intrastate agency relationships; e) "ticket" program implementation; f) "model" providers; g) working with advocates; h) resources on consumer directed services (CDS) and personal assistant services (PAS); i) information on federal activity impacting on TWWIIA programs (regulatory and legislative and j) other germane subjects related to TWWIIA.

Several media are employed.

- **Print.** The Center produces a bi-monthly newsletter, entitled *Working for Tomorrow*, providing up-to-date coverage of TWWIIA implementation and other disability policy developments. Additionally, especially significant disability policy developments are covered in existing APHSA and National Association of State Medicaid Directors (NASMD) channels such as the APHSA weekly newsletter, *This Week in Washington*, and APHSA's quarterly journal *Policy and Practice*, the monthly NASMD *MMI Bulletin* and quarterly NASMD *Directions*, and other special mailings.

Special Reports and Subscriptions

Center staff also are planning several special reports and more in depth print publications. The Center currently is in "start-up" phase and no publications have been issued. However, to receive press releases and special notices of availability, transmit contact information to Michael Cheek, Project Director, at mcheek@aphsa.org.

- **Electronic.** The Center will maintain an extensive Web site offering a wealth of information TWWIIA implementation efforts and other, related disability policy developments. The site will be activated in May 2001.

For more information on the Center for Workers with Disabilities – including membership information, the National Association of State Medicaid Directors or to be added to the Center’s mailing list for special meetings, new publications, or special initiatives, contact Michael Cheek, Project Director, at:

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